

Community engagement and participation in the Eastern Marovo Lagoon, Western Province, Solomon Islands

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Acronyms

| | |
|-------|---|
| IWP | International Waters Project |
| MPA | Marine Protected Area |
| NGO | non-government organisation |
| NTF | National Task Force |
| SPREP | Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme |
| TOR | term of reference |

Introduction

The International Waters Project (IWP)¹ is a 7-year, USD 12 million initiative concerned with management and conservation of marine, coastal and freshwater resources in the Pacific islands region, and is specifically intended to address the root causes of environmental degradation related to trans-boundary issues in the Pacific. The project includes two components: an integrated coastal and watershed management component, and an oceanic fisheries management component (the latter has been managed as a separate project). It is financed by the Global Environment Facility under its International Waters Programme. The coastal component is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme and executed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), in conjunction with the governments of the 14 independent Pacific Island countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The coastal component supports national and community-level actions² that address priority environmental concerns relating to marine and fresh water quality, habitat modification and degradation and unsustainable use of living marine resources through a 7-year phase of pilot activities, which started in 2000 and will conclude at the end of 2006.

The theme and location of each pilot project was selected on the basis of community and government consultation. Each project is expected to have adopted an interdisciplinary approach involving the three pillars — economic, social and environmental — of sustainable development. Each project is intended to address the root causes of degradation affecting one or more of four focal areas:

- marine protected areas
- coastal fisheries
- freshwater resources
- waste reduction.

The IWP in Solomon Islands is a collaborative effort between traditional resource owners, and Solomon Islands' Ministry of Natural Resources through the Departments of Forestry, Environment and Conservation and Fisheries and Marine Resources. It is also supported by non-government organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders, notably the private sector involved in dive and eco-tourism.

During a review of the priority environmental concern in Solomon Islands (see Horokou 2002) two focal areas were highlighted as priority areas for action under the IWP. The two areas identified were:

- sustainable coastal fisheries management³, and
- protection of fresh water resources.

The project in Solomon Islands is steered by the Solomon Islands' National Task Force (NTF), which includes representatives from the pilot project sites, government and NGOs. The National Coordinator provides the day-to-day management, while Community Facilities are responsible for capacity building of community members and on-the-ground implementation of IWP activities.

¹ IWP is formally titled Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States.

² Community based activities may include low-tech solutions to addressing environmental degradation while national level activities may involve activities that have a broader or more strategic focus.

³ A thorough review of coastal fisheries problems and critical ecosystems has been carried out by the IWP (see Dalzell and Schug 2002; Bleakley 2004).

IWP, under the guidance of the NTF, has decided to focus on promoting sustainable coastal fisheries by establishing a system of Marine Protected Areas⁴ (MPAs). It is also intended to promote increased community involvement and responsibility for local resource management and conservation.

The process of pilot site selection (see IWP 2002) involved soliciting "expression of interest" through a three-month national-wide media campaign by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, with the assistance from the Solomon Islands Development Trust drama team. A total of 35 communities eventually registered interest. A preliminary short listing was then conducted using a ranking process⁵ and this eventually led to the identification of four possible project sites:

- Marovo Lagoon,
- Gizo, Kolombangara and Rarumana Islands,
- North Malaita, and
- Kia and the Arnavon Islands.

These short listed communities were then visited to confirm their interest and to garner any information of coastal fisheries problems through the preliminary use of participatory tools and techniques. This process took roughly three months, with a total of 18 communities being visited. Following this process, Mbili Passage and Chea communities, both located in the Marovo Lagoon of the Western Province, were selected.

Because of the cultural setting of Solomon Islands, a series of phased activities involving key stakeholders from the pilot communities and other relevant groups are to be implemented. These include:

- stakeholder engagement and planning for stakeholder consultations;
- conducting participatory consultations using appropriate participatory tools and techniques;
- implementing social, economic and environmental baseline assessments to assess the scale of problems and causes;
- identification and selection of solutions to address root causes; and
- development of action plans for implementation.

To this end, a series of activities related specifically to the pilot communities have occurred to date. These include:

- Community Facilitator Training for three IWP Solomon Islands staff as part of a sub-regional training program by SPREP/IWP in August 2003;
- preliminary investigation of issues and development of community profiles of the pilot communities in March and April, 2004;
- Participatory consultation and preliminary socioeconomic baseline assessment in June, 2004;
- environmental baseline assessment in September, 2004;
- further socioeconomic baseline assessment in December, 2004; and
- beche-de-mer fishery survey, confirmation of previous socioeconomic baseline assessments and further environmental baseline assessment in April, 2005.

This report relates specifically to participatory consultation activities.

⁴ The IWP has also conducted a synopsis of the benefits and impacts of MPAs and the practicalities of implementation (see Huber and McGregor 2002).

⁵ This system was utilised in the specific hope that political interference, manipulation by 'wantoks' and staff bias would be minimised.

How this document was prepared

The Community Facilitators (Nelly Kere and Patrick Mesia) initially developed a draft document after the participatory consultation was conducted in June 2004. This draft document was then given to the National Coordinator, Kenneth Bulehite for review and input. Unfortunately, due to continuous preparation for further activities and other program commitments the document was never finalised.

In February 2005, Jeff Kinch, Coastal Fisheries Advisor, University of Papua New Guinea, was contracted by IWP to design and coordinate a socioeconomic baseline assessment for the IWP pilot project in the Solomon Islands. It was apparent from a review of the data that had already been collected that many of the activities under his terms of reference (TOR)⁶ had already been covered by the Solomon Island team, but had not been clearly documented in content or by process.

Subsequently, after a team meeting it was decided that Jeff would collate and analyse the existing information and draft documents, and produce reports on the participatory consultation and the socioeconomic baseline. In this task he was assisted by continual interaction with Nelly and Patrick, who provided further insights into the participatory consultation and other project activities. The report preparation was also aided by discussions with the Chea Committee Chairman Alrick Jimuru.

⁶ The TOR were subsequently revised to accommodate other activities to support the IWP project in the Solomon Islands.

The participatory consultation

The purpose of a participatory consultative process in the pilot communities was to encourage community identification of the root causes for any coastal fisheries-related problems they were experiencing and to then develop solutions to these problems. It also acted as a mechanism for the exchange of information between the pilot communities and the Community Facilitators. The Community Facilitators were also able to make general observations about the community structure and day-to-day life during the participatory consultations.

The main tool used to identify problems and develop solutions was a problem tree, which uses several hierarchical levels to identify the root causes of the communities' resource management problems. This is in turn transferred (through rephrasing of problems) into a solution tree.

This method provides a mechanism for villages to determine their coastal and reef conservation and fisheries management strategies, and allows for guidance in the implementation process and methodology, including the input that is required from communities, IWP, other NGOs, stakeholders and the government.

The use of a participatory consultation process in the pilot communities using Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools has helped in identifying the following:

- fisheries related problems;
- possible solutions;
- possible impacts of these identified solutions on the social and socioeconomic development of the community;
- alternative income generating projects to offset the opportunity costs of implementing the identified solutions; and
- a community-based implementation and management strategy for the community.

It has also served to inform national level processes to support community-based management arrangements.

Once the Community Facilitators arrived in the pilot communities, several villagers were identified by the respective community Project Committees for training as Village Facilitators. The criteria for selection of these Village Facilitators was simply that they be capable of representing all village members. These identified villagers were then meant to go through an initial training program, so as to act as facilitators in their home villages, and assist the work of the Community Facilitators. The intention was that they would then conduct participatory consultations with other members of their own community. This did not happen, however, as the selected Villagers Facilitators who went through the training program were already very well informed about the problems their villages were experiencing. It was then decided by the Community Facilitators that it was unnecessary to elicit this information from the wider community, and that it would be appropriate to conduct the participatory consultation with the Village Facilitators only.

Broader community participation (which served to provide feedback and to raise awareness) took place through evening community meetings, at which the participant Village Facilitators presented each day's findings to the community. Community Facilitators felt that this arrangement worked well, as the majority of community members were not available during the day due to other commitments. These evening presentations were conducted in the Marovo language.

The consultation was carried out over a four-day period in each of the pilot communities, with a total of about a week spent in each community during June 2004. Notes and materials for the training workshop were selected from the resource kit materials compiled by Mahanty and

Stacey (2004). In Mbili Passage there were 11 participants, while at Chea there were 12. A list of participant Village Facilitators is given in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Participant Village Facilitators

| Mbili Passage | Chea |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Moloka Luten | Osmond Patteson Dioni |
| Fox Ata | Ronald Ronter |
| Kenroy Robert | Puiki Taddy |
| Samburo Soga | Ms Rillance Lekezoto |
| Mamutu George | Winter Buka |
| Horton Posala | Ms Louna Resley |
| Nathaniel Koli | John Nelson |
| Paul John | Morgan Jimuru |
| Clement Pana | Frazer Dioni |
| Peterson Poghoso | Lapae Meani |
| Rivoqani Pita | Hemes Namusu |
| | Ms Tonia Silas |

The workshop program

The program for the participatory consultation in each pilot community followed the same agenda. The first item for discussion after the opening prayer and opening statements was a general introduction of the overall IWP strategy and the purpose of the participatory consultation workshop (see Box 1).

Box 1: Opening Statement

The opening statement for the Chea workshop, by Alrick Jimuru highlighted the importance of support in establishing the pilot projects of the IWP in Chea village.

It is a privilege that Chea's application to be a pilot community for IWP's projects was accepted, while many other communities in the Solomon Islands have also expressed their interests. Chea, with very little land area and with an increasing population, has to work together with such organizations, which are showing keen interest to work with the rural people to be able to manage and develop the valuable resources they have in a sustainable manner.

The chairman for Mbili community also made similar remarks and expressed the urgent need for the village chiefs and leaders to quickly put the community in order [*sic*: to solve the divisions due to logging], and to provide a situation that will allow IWP to implement its plans and objectives that will address their community fishery problems.

After this had been digested by the participant Village Facilitators and they had given a clear indication of the purpose of the participatory consultation, the workshop activities formerly began (Table 2).⁷

⁷ The workshop programme was developed by the IWP Solomon team in isolation from the wider IWP project. The participatory consultative process could have been enhanced by discussions with the IWP Regional Community Assessment and Participation Specialist. As mentioned above the participants were originally selected by the community Project Committees to be trained as Village Facilitators, thus the activities they went through were more for training rather than for gathering information and developing community action.

Table 2: Workshop program

| Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 |
|--|---|---------------------------|---|
| Official Opening and prayer IWP overview | Identifying stakeholders – case study | Problem tree analysis | Poster presentations |
| Workshop overview and aims What is a facilitator? | Stakeholder analysis (in relation to problems) | Solution tree analysis | Identification of possible alternative projects |
| Roles of a facilitator Attitudes of a facilitator | Stakeholder analysis (in relation to project outcomes and solution) | Resource mapping | Closing ceremony |
| Identification of a stakeholder | Stakeholder analysis | | |
| Problems that might arise in facilitating | | | |

The first activity was a discussion on the concepts and process of participation and facilitation. This discussion filled all of Day 1. Specific discussion points included:

- what is facilitation?
- what is a facilitator?
- what is his or her role?
- attitudes and attributes of a facilitator
- problems that may arise while facilitating
- how to mitigate these

Day 2 of the participatory consultation brought the participants together to further identify stakeholders and to discuss inputs and impacts necessary to identify the problems facing the community in relation to coastal resource management and/or degradation. For the purpose of the participatory consultation, stakeholders were defined as any individual, group or organisation with a direct interest in the use and management of the natural resource and who may or perceive themselves to be affected by, or can affect conservation and management activities.

The key areas covered in this section were:

- what is a stakeholder? and
- identification of stakeholder

The details of the stakeholder analysis (Tables 3 and 4) were first generated by the Solomon Islands IWP team during the Community Facilitator Training in Vanuatu in August 2003. During the participatory consultation in the communities, the table was used as a guide for possible stakeholders, with the Village Facilitators providing further details regarding the extent to which stakeholders contribute to the problems of marine resource depletion and degradation of the marine environment, and how they would be affected by possible interventions. Tables 3 and 4 was finally completed by Jeff Kinch in consultation with the Solomon Islands IWP team. The Day 2 results for both communities showed similar trends.

Day 3 saw the participant Village Facilitators identifying problems and then solutions. During this exercise participants were divided into groups to note problems experienced by their respective communities in regards to fisheries related matters.

The most common problems identified were:

- coastal erosion
- depletion of marine resources
 - over-harvesting of clams
 - over-harvesting of beche-de-mer
 - decline in fish stocks

- improper waste disposal
 - throwing rubbish carelessly in the sea.

From the problem trees, it was then possible to begin initiating solutions that could minimize or alleviate the problem of overfishing. This part of the program was also assisted by the use of a resource mapping exercise which delineated spawning aggregation sites, fishing and diving grounds, turtle nesting grounds, sacred sites and others sites of significance or exploitation.

Even though the participants were aware of these problems, the participatory consultation was a useful tool for bringing these issues to the forefront of community consciousness.

Problem and solution trees for each category and community are given below following Tables 3 and 4.



Plate 1: Mbili Passage participants at the Participation Problem Analysis Workshop



Plate 2: Nelly Kere, IWP Community Facilitator assisting participants during the PPA workshop



Plate 3: Drawing produced during the PPA detailing destructive fishing practices and impacts of over-harvesting

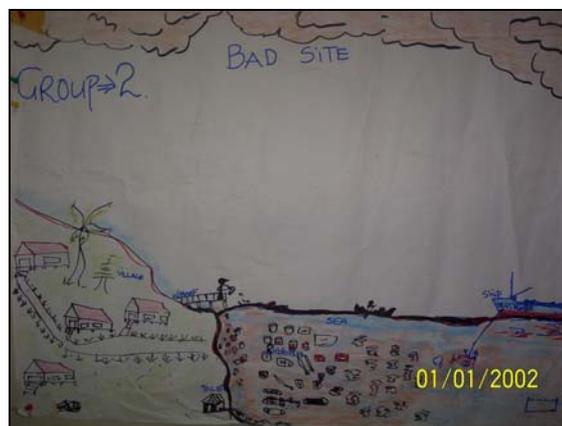


Plate 4: Drawing produced during the PPA detailing problems of waste disposal

Table 3: Stakeholders Analysis: Mbili Passage

| Stakeholders | In what ways they affected by a problem? | The extent they are affected by the problem | In what ways will they likely be affected by project outcomes or solutions? | The extent to which they may be affected by project outcomes or solutions |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Fishers – Mbili Passage, Sombiro, Bunikalo and Kavolavata communities | Reduction in subsistence values and economic returns. Less catch and more effort. | Very High | May affect where, when and how they fish. | Very high |
| Bekabeka Community High School | Not affected directly, possible decline in protein supply and ability to pay of student fees. | Moderate | Protein supply.. | Moderate |
| Batuna Market | Higher prices. Loss of income. | Moderate | May increase or decrease sales. | Moderate |
| Youth Group | Reduction in subsistence values and economic returns. Less catch and more effort. | Moderate | May affect where, when and how they fish. | High |
| Seventh-day Adventist Church | Reduction in tithes (church donation) and ability of church to function. | High | May increase or decrease tithes. | High |
| Beche-de-mer Buyers | Higher prices. Loss of income. | High | May increase or decrease sales. | High |
| Uepi Resort | Tourists come to experience natural splendours. Reduction in seafood on the menu. | Moderate | May affect tourist experience by restricting activities. May increase or decrease visitation rates. | High |
| Biliki Dive boat | Tourists come to experience natural splendours. Reduction in seafood on the menu. | Moderate | May affect tourist experience by restricting activities. May increase or decrease visitation rates. | High |
| Spirit of Solomon | Tourists come to experience natural splendours. Reduction in seafood on the menu. | Moderate | May affect tourist experience by restricting activities. May increase or decrease visitation rates. | High |
| Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau | Promotes tourism for the Marovo Lagoon. | Low | May promote more tourists. | Moderate |
| Fisheries | Responsible for fisheries management and | Low | May require more funding and personnel | Moderate |

| Stakeholders | In what ways they affected by a problem? | The extent they are affected by the problem | In what ways will they likely be affected by project outcomes or solutions? | The extent to which they may be affected by project outcomes or solutions |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Department | regulation. | | for enforcement and monitoring. | |
| Environment Division | Responsible for environmental management and regulation. | Low | May require more funding and personnel for enforcement and monitoring. | Moderate |
| Western Provincial Government | Responsible for administration and rural services. | Low | May require more funding and personnel. | Moderate |
| IWP | Responsible for implementing coastal and marine resource management in pilot communities. | High | May be replicated to other pilot sites. | High |
| UNESCO –World Heritage | Loss of World Heritage values. | Moderate | May promote the biodiversity values and uniqueness on the global stage. | Moderate |
| Marovo Council of Chiefs | Responsible for traditional governance. Cultural and social control. | Moderate | Increase standing and respect for traditional governance and cultural values. | High |
| University of Queensland | Implementing coastal management program and biological monitoring. | Moderate | May help with monitoring effects of management. | Moderate |
| SOPAC | Interest in studying hydrodynamics of the Marovo Lagoon. | Low | May determine further MPA and pilot project sites. | Moderate |
| Solomon Taiyo company | Reduction in bait-fishery. Loss of income | Moderate | Increase in revenue and royalties. | High |
| Bulo Logging Company | | Low | May cause the cessation of logging. | High |

Table 4: Stakeholders Analysis: Chea

| Stakeholders | In what ways they affected by a problem? | The extent they are affected by the problem | In what ways will they likely be affected by project outcomes or solutions? | The extent to which they may be affected by project outcomes or solutions |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Fishers – Chea, Rukutu, Sasaghana , and Chumbikopi communities | Reduction in subsistence values and economic returns. Less catch and more effort. | Very High | May affect where, when and how they fish. | Very high |
| Gepae Community High School | Not affected directly, possible decline in protein supply and ability to pay of student fees. | Moderate | Protein supply.. | Moderate |
| Batuna Market | Higher prices. Loss of income. | Moderate | May increase or decrease sales. | Moderate |
| Youth Group | Reduction in subsistence values and economic returns. Less catch and more effort. | Moderate | May affect where, when and how they fish. | High |
| Seventh-day Adventist Church | Reduction in tithes (church donation) and ability of church to function. | High | May increase or decrease tithes. | High |
| Beche-de-mer Buyers | Higher prices. Loss of income. | High | May increase or decrease sales. | High |
| Seghe Rural Fisheries Centre | Higher prices. Loss of income. | Low | May increase or decrease sales. | Low |
| Uepi Resort | Tourists come to experience natural splendours. Reduction in seafood on the menu. | Moderate | May affect tourist experience by restricting activities. May increase or decrease visitation rates. | High |
| Biliki Dive boat | Tourists come to experience natural splendours. Reduction in seafood on the menu. | Moderate | May affect tourist experience by restricting activities. May increase or decrease visitation rates. | High |
| Spirit of Solomon | Tourists come to experience natural splendours. Reduction in seafood on the menu. | Moderate | May affect tourist experience by restricting activities. May increase or decrease visitation rates. | High |
| SI Visitors Bureau | Promotes tourism for the Marovo Lagoon. | Low | May promote more tourists. | Moderate |
| Fisheries Department | Responsible for fisheries management and regulation. | Low | May require more funding and personnel for enforcement and monitoring. | Moderate |

| Stakeholders | In what ways they affected by a problem? | The extent they are affected by the problem | In what ways will they likely be affected by project outcomes or solutions? | The extent to which they may be affected by project outcomes or solutions |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Environment Division | Responsible for environmental management and regulation. | Low | May require more funding and personnel for enforcement and monitoring. | Moderate |
| Western Provincial Government | Responsible for administration and rural services. | Low | May require more funding and personnel. | Moderate |
| IWP | Responsible for implementing coastal and marine resource management in pilot communities. | High | May be replicated to other pilot sites. | High |
| UNESCO –World Heritage | Loss of World Heritage values. | Moderate | May promote the biodiversity values and uniqueness on the global stage. | Moderate |
| Marovo Council of Chiefs | Responsible for traditional governance. Cultural and social control. | Moderate | Increase standing and respect for traditional governance and cultural values. | High |
| University of Queensland | Implementing coastal management program and biological monitoring. | Moderate | May help with monitoring effects of management. | Moderate |
| SOPAC | Interest in studying hydrodynamics of Marovo Lagoon. | Low | May determine further MPA and pilot project sites. | Moderate |
| Solomon Taiyo company | Reduction in bait-fishery. Loss of income | Moderate | Increase in revenue and royalties. | High |
| Logging Companies | | Low | May cause the cessation of logging. | High |

Figure 1: Mbili Passage: Problem tree for the depletion of marine resource

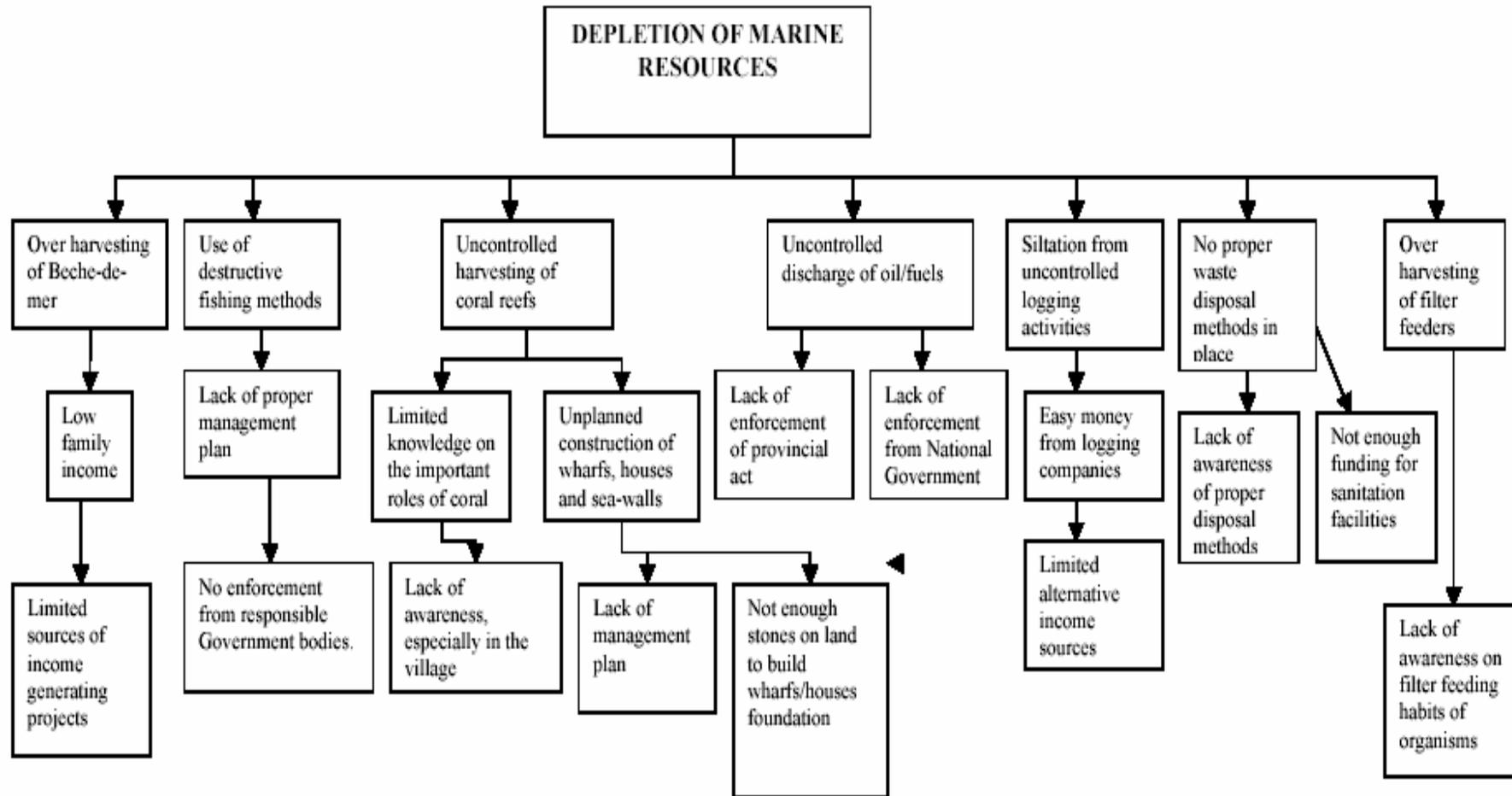


Figure 2: Mbili Passage: Solution tree for the depletion of marine resource

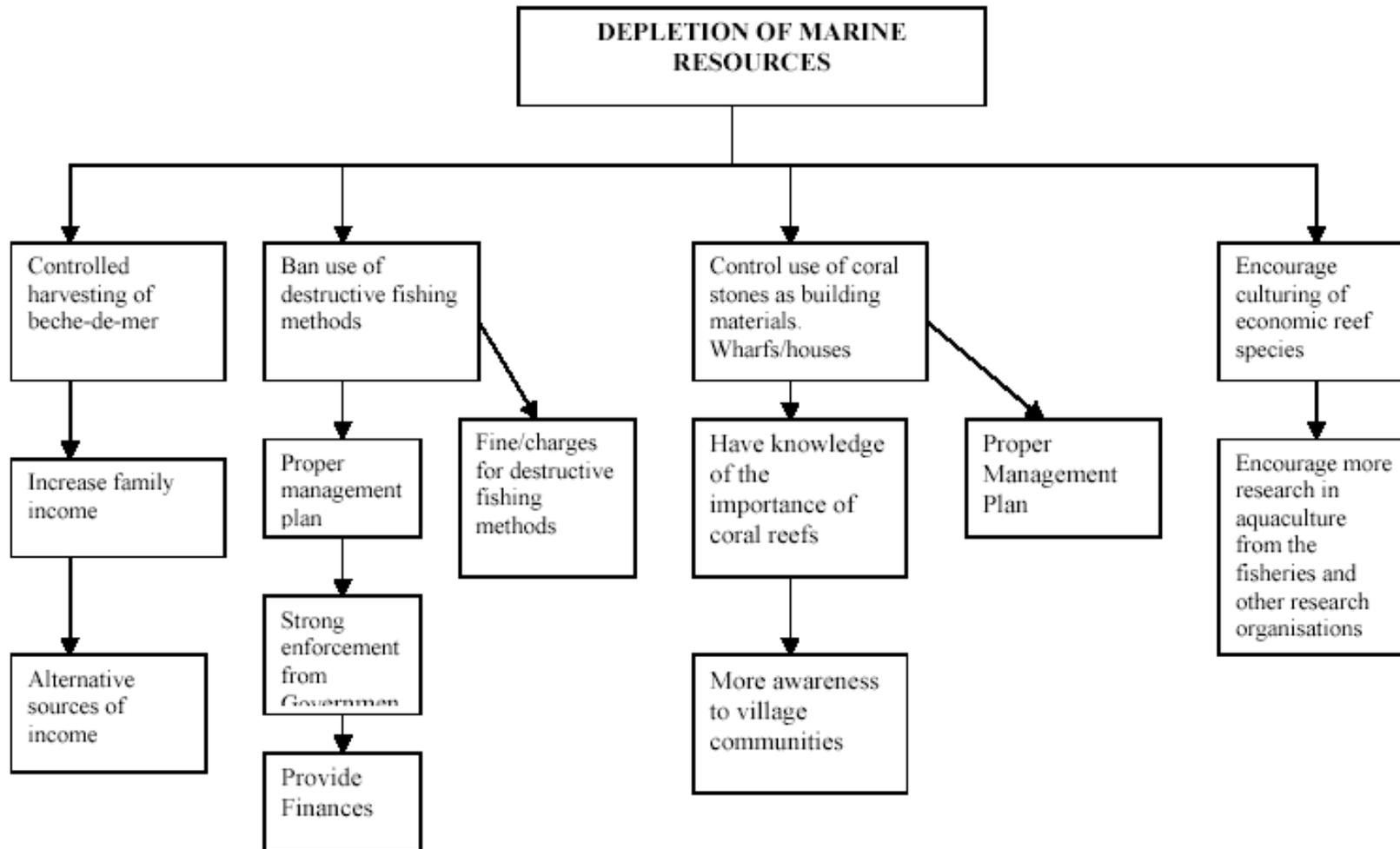


Figure 3: Mbili Passage: Problem tree for coastal erosion

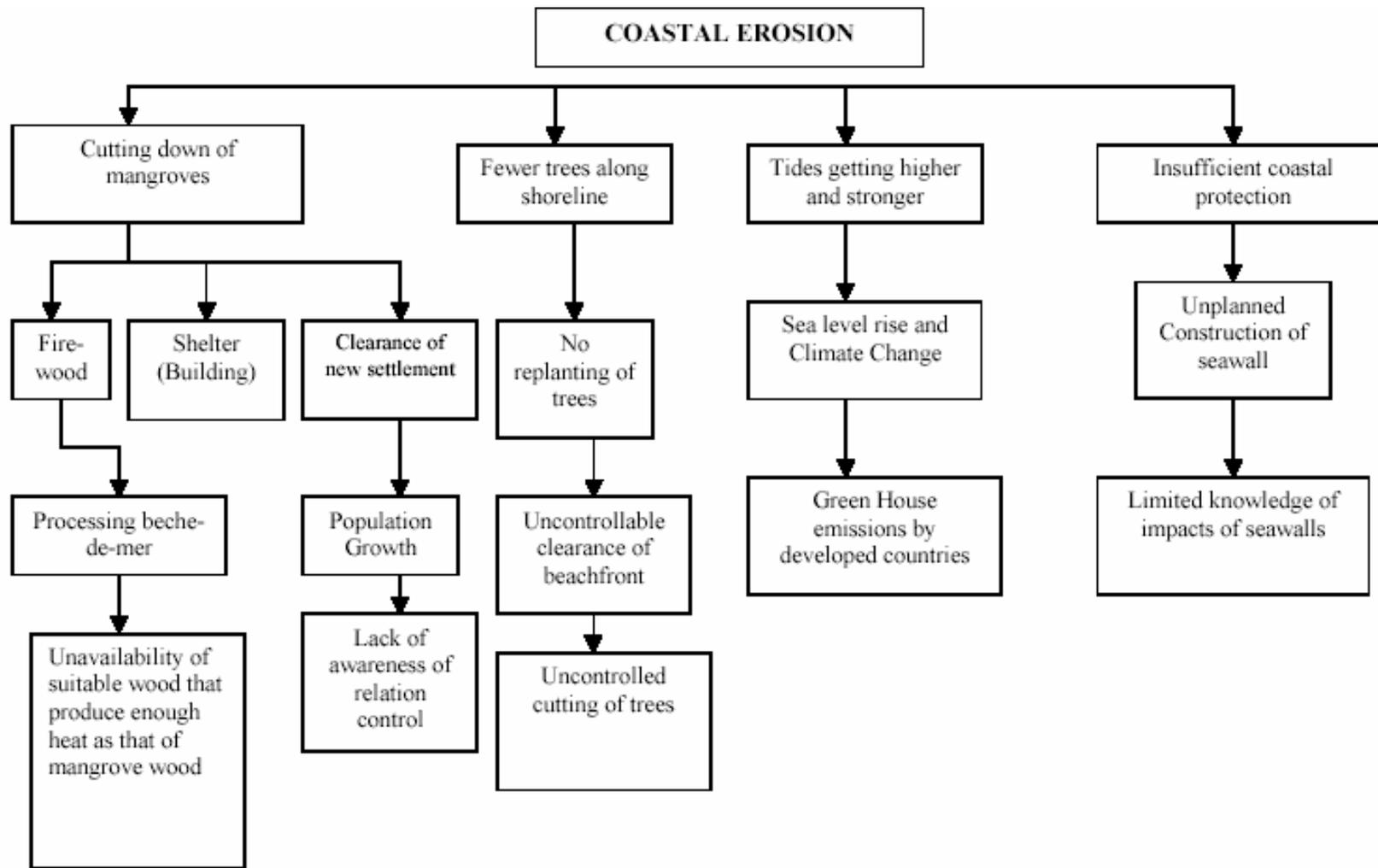


Figure 4: Mbili Passage: Solution tree for coastal erosion

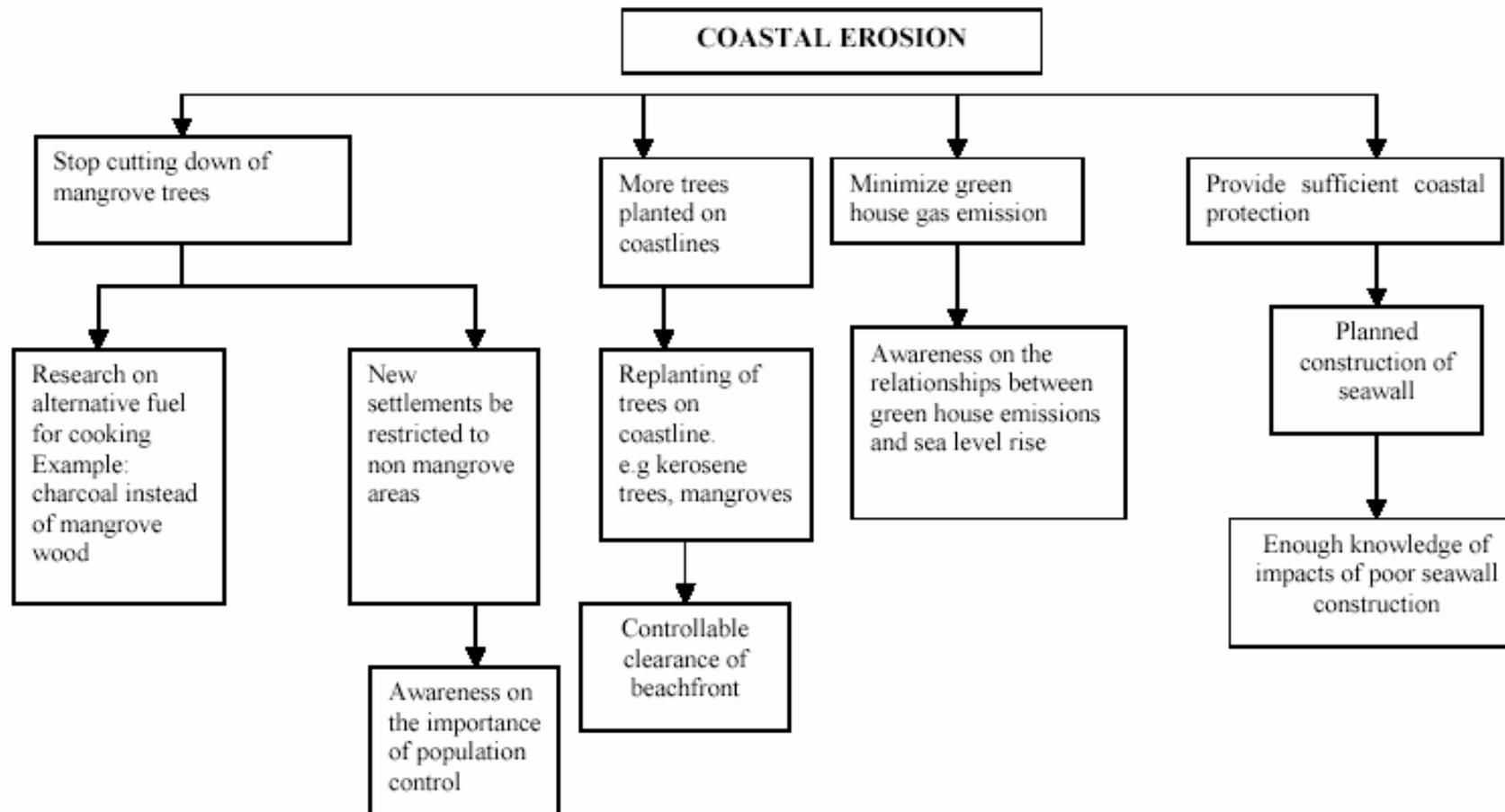


Figure 5: Mbili Passage: Problem tree for coastal marine pollution

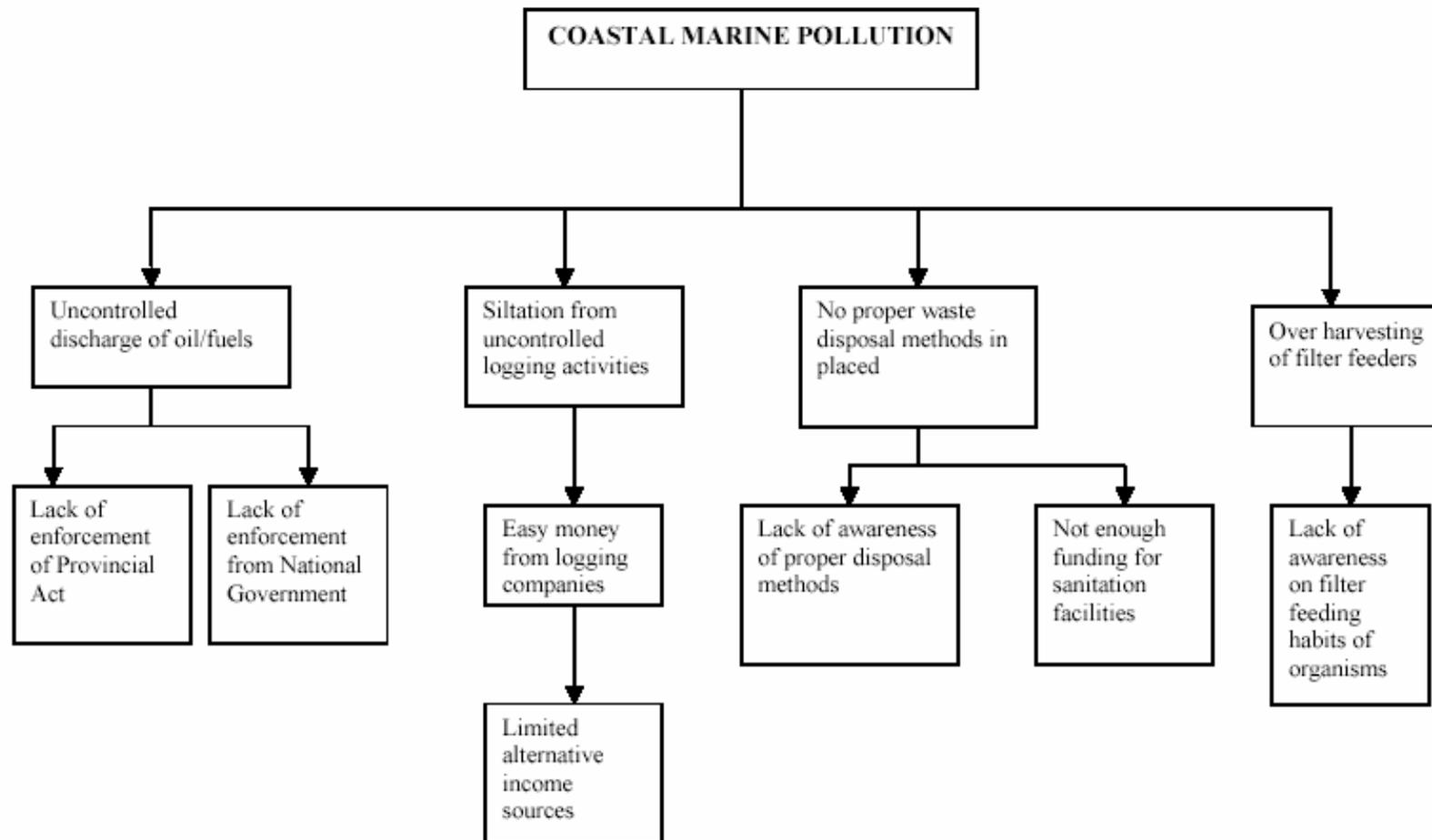


Figure 6: Mbili Passage: Solution tree for coastal marine pollution

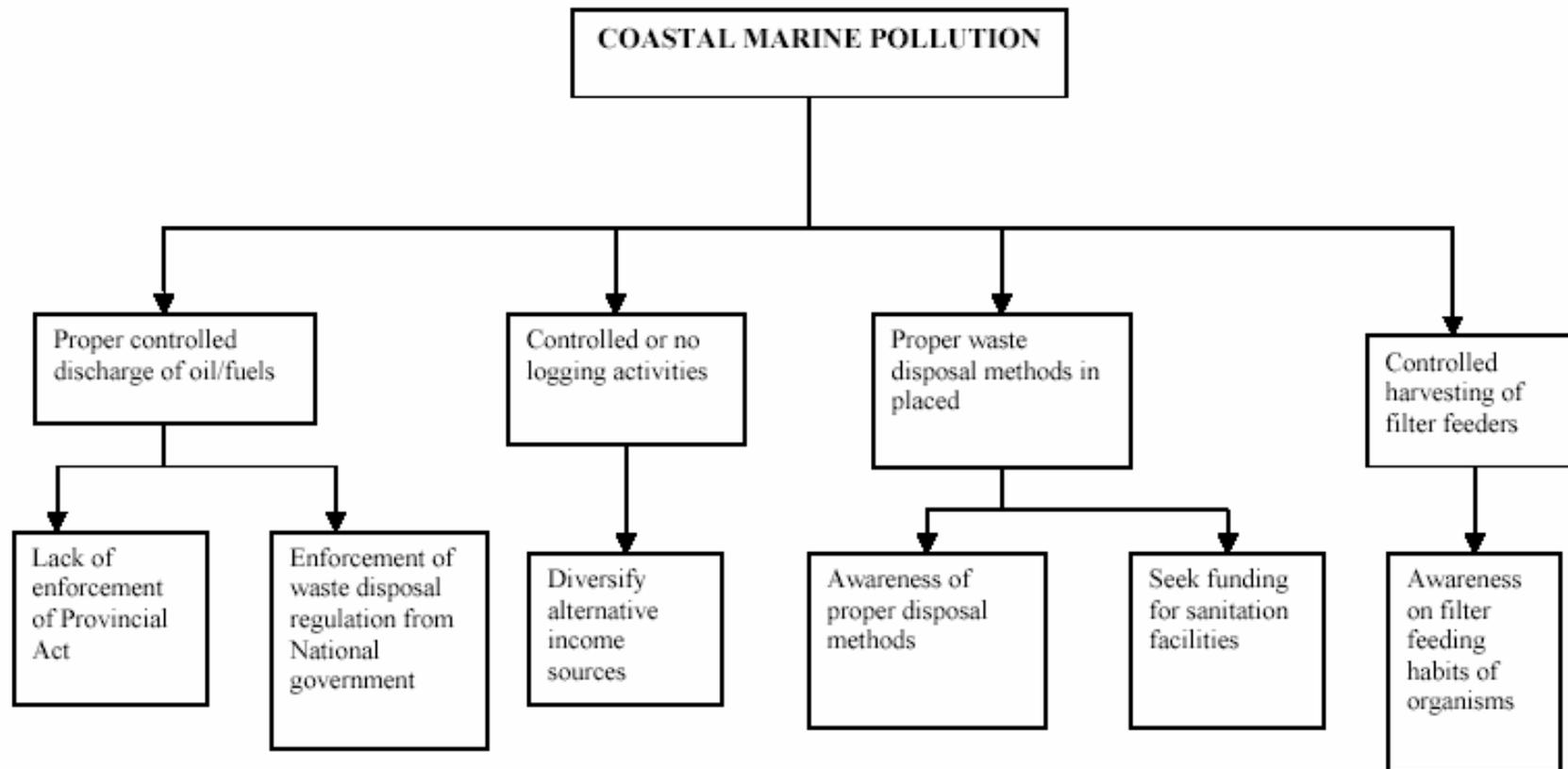


Figure 7: Chea: Problem tree for the degradation of coastal waters and marine resources

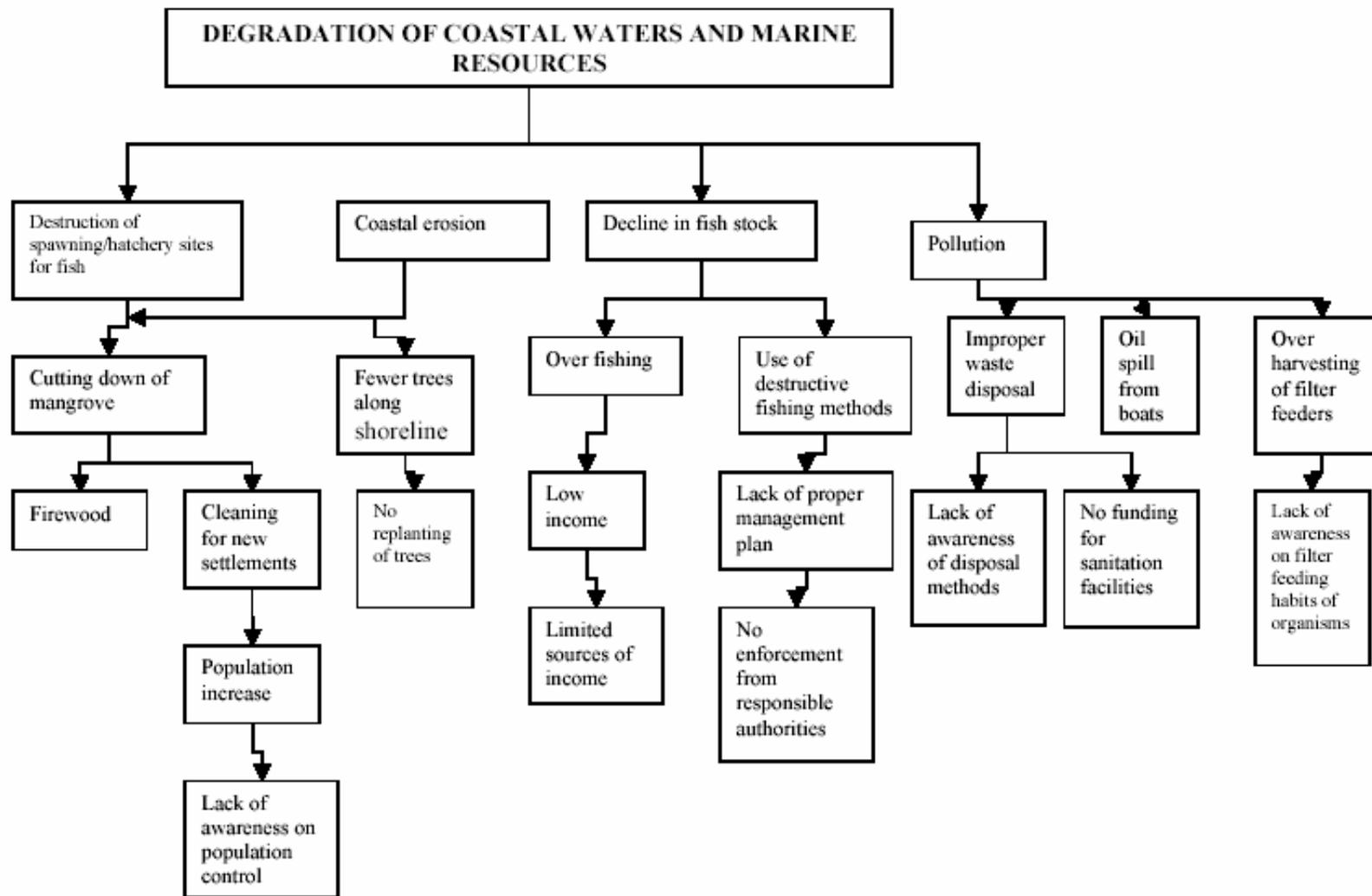
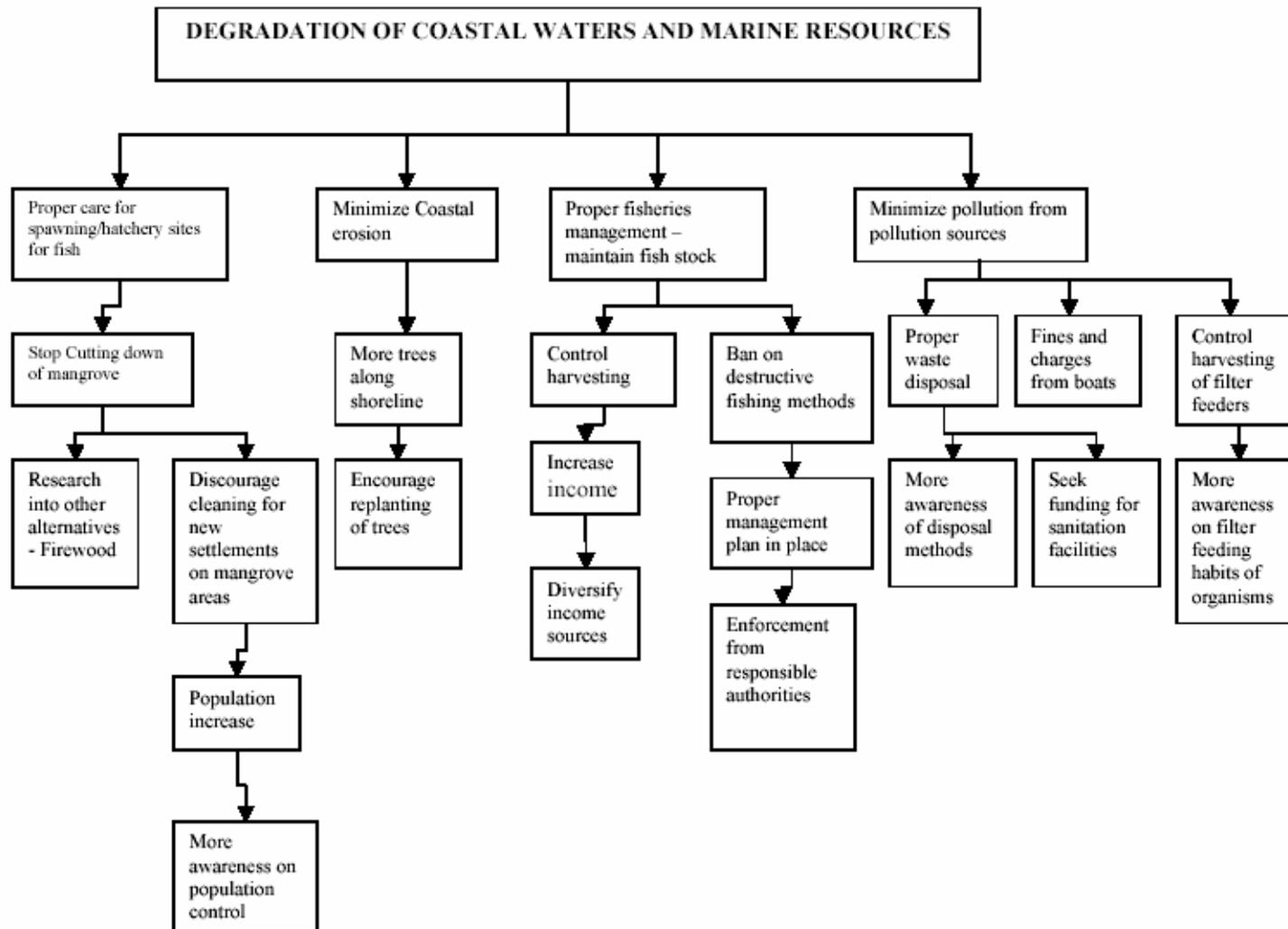


Figure 8: Chea: Solution tree for the degradation of coastal waters and marine resources



On the 4th and final day, each group presented its findings back to the main body of participants (Village Facilitators), and the participants used posters they had created during the course of the workshop to present the problems and solutions trees back to the community. This was also done in the Marovo language, for better comprehension and to seek feedback.

With knowledge gained from the participatory consultation, community members started to realise the impact they have on their own coastal environment, and their roles and responsibilities in addressing these problems. For example, participants identified the importance of conserving mangrove forests, which act as buffers from wave erosion and cyclones, provide spawning and nursery grounds for many marine animals, as well as harbouring terrestrial animals that live and that nest in them.

The main solution generated by the participatory consultation was the recognition by participants and community members of the potential benefits to fisheries (through replenishment of stocks) of the establishment of marine protected areas (MPA) in their community's waters. Although this was identified as an effective tool for fisheries management, there were concerns expressed over the subsistence impacts and loss of income opportunities (e.g. for school fees and church contributions) resulting from the closing of portions of their home reefs to harvesting. Discussions took place regarding possible income and livelihoods opportunities, and community projects were also identified (see Table 5).⁸

Table 5: Alternative livelihoods and community projects

| Mbili Passage | Chea |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Coral gardening | Coral gardening |
| Eco-Forestry (portable saw milling) | Eco-tourism |
| Fishing project | Fishing project |
| Honey-bee keeping | Honey-bee keeping |
| Kerosene wood planting (for carving) | Kerosene wood planting (for carving) |
| Marine Protected Area | Library and information centre |
| Market outlet for sale of artefacts | Mangrove reforestation |
| Sewing | Marine Protected Area |
| Vanilla and chilli farming | Sale of carving and handicrafts outlet |
| Village bakery | Seaweed farming |
| | Vanilla farming |

⁸ An assessment of livelihood options will be conducted later this year to determine what livelihood possibilities are feasible.

Problems encountered during the workshop

One of the biggest problems encountered while doing community-based resource management programs in Melanesia is the problem of project dependency and perceived benefits or "cargo" that may arise from participating in the project.

The Community Facilitators have been aware of this and have reminded communities of IWP's role, and how and why the project is there to assist them. Despite this, there is still a strong element of dependency. Specific problems in this regard that relate to the participatory consultation were:

- the request by participant Village Facilitators for workshop allowances for participation; and
- disagreements over payment for cooking services provided to the workshop.

The other main issue that affected the participatory consultation at Mbili Passage was the existing community division over the presence of logging in their area. Because of this, it was difficult at times to get the whole community to come together to hear the evening presentations.

Recommendations

The participant Village Facilitators and the broader community generated the following recommendations:

- additional capacity building and training for the Village Facilitators in analysing the information generated from the participatory consultation, particularly social and economic problems;
- the Community Facilitators should spend more time in the communities so as to further assist the villagers in developing solution strategies;
- Village Facilitators must have regular communication with the Community Facilitators so as to allow adequate time for preparation of visits, but also to allow enough time to achieve activities in a given period of time; and
- Village Facilitators must have feedback from Community Facilitators on activities done in the communities, so as to allow for proper dissemination of information generated by workshops, surveys and other activities.

The Community Facilitators highlighted the following needs:

- increase workshop times so as to allow sufficient time for important topics to be discussed in full;
- allow adequate preparation time so that Community Facilitators can familiarise themselves with the workshop training materials;
- simplify technical topics for better community comprehension; and
- enhance collaboration with other NGOs and/or groups of similar interests, with the intention of sharing ideas and exchanging experiences.

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